IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows:

1. (Currently Amended) A method for joining end portions of belt-shaped glass sheets, the end portions each having longitudinal side surfaces and a terminal end surface, comprising:

thermally softening the end portions of the belt-shaped glass sheets after locating the end portions so that the end portions overlap each other with longitudinal side surfaces of the end portions abutting one another ~~in a thickness direction of each glass sheet within the range of the glass sheet width~~; and

pressing lap portions of the thermally softened end portions at least once from both sides towards the abutting longitudinal side surfaces ~~in the thickness direction of the belt-shaped glass sheets~~, thereby joining the lap portions together and forming the lap portions to ~~the~~ a thickness of one belt-shaped glass sheet.

2. (Original) A method for joining belt-shaped glass sheets according to claim 1, wherein the thermally softened end portions are clamped at least once for a clamping time of about 2 seconds or less.

3. (Previously Presented) A method for joining belt-shaped glass sheets according to claim 1, wherein the end portions are superposed on each other so that the belt-shaped glass sheets form corner portions, the belt-shaped glass sheets are then held substantially within a vertical plane with the inside of the corner portions vertically upward, and the end portions are then thermally softened and pressed.

4. (Original) A joining method for belt-shaped glass sheets according to claim 3,

wherein the end portions of the belt-shaped glass sheets are superposed on each other with end corners of the belt-shaped glass sheets partially notched.

5. (Currently Amended) A joining apparatus which joins ~~the~~ end portions of belt-shaped glass sheets, comprising:

a glass sheet holding portion which holds a plurality of belt-shaped glass sheets so that only the end portions thereof overlap each other ~~in a thickness direction of each glass sheet within the range of the glass sheet width~~;

a heating mechanism which thermally softens the end portions of the held belt-shaped glass sheets; and

a clamping mechanism configured to press lap portions of the thermally softened end portions from both sides in ~~the~~ a thickness direction of the belt-shaped glass sheets, thereby joining the lap portions together and forming the lap portions to the thickness of one belt-shaped glass sheet.

6. (Previously Presented) A joining apparatus according to claim 5, wherein the clamping mechanism includes a pair of pressure dies movable between a clamping position, in which the dies face each other across a gap substantially equal to the thickness of the belt-shaped glass sheet, and an open position, in which the dies are spaced, and a drive mechanism which moves the pair of pressure dies from the open position to the clamping position with the lap portions of the belt-shaped glass sheets situated between the pair of pressure dies so that the lap portions are clamped and pressed by means of the pressure dies.

7. (Original) A joining apparatus according to claim 6, wherein the glass sheet holding portion includes a rack, which holds the belt-shaped glass sheets substantially flush

with one another in a manner such that the belt-shaped glass sheets extend across one another and that the end portions are superposed on each other so that the belt-shaped glass sheets form corner portions, and a base which supports the rack so that the belt-shaped glass sheets are situated substantially within a vertical plane with the inside of the corner portions vertically upward and that the lap portions are situated between the pair of pressure dies.

8. (Currently Amended) A method of manufacturing a glass frame, comprising:

holding a plurality of belt-shaped glass sheets substantially flush with one another in the form of a frame and locating ~~the~~ end portions, which each have longitudinal side surfaces and a terminal end surface, of each two adjacent belt-shaped glass sheets so that the end portions overlap each other with longitudinal side surfaces of the end portions abutting one another ~~in a thickness direction of each glass sheet within the range of the glass sheet width~~;

thermally softening the end portions of the belt-shaped glass sheets; and

pressing lap portions of the thermally softened end portions at least once from both sides towards the abutting longitudinal side surfaces ~~in the thickness direction of the belt-shaped glass sheets~~, thereby joining the lap portions together and forming the lap portions to ~~the~~ a thickness of one belt-shaped glass sheet.

9. (Original) A method manufacturing for a glass frame according to claim 8, wherein the thermally softened end portions are clamped at least once for a clamping time of about 2 seconds or less.

10. (Previously Presented) A method for manufacturing a glass frame according to claim 8, wherein the belt-shaped glass sheets are held substantially within a vertical plane in a manner such that the inside of corner portions defined by the end portions of the belt-shaped

glass sheets faces vertically upward, and the end portions are thermally softened and pressed.

11. (Currently Amended) A manufacturing apparatus which manufactures a glass frame by joining ~~the~~ end portions of belt-shaped glass sheets, comprising:

a glass sheet holding portion which holds a plurality of belt-shaped glass sheets so that only the end portions thereof overlap each other ~~in a thickness direction of each glass sheet within the range of the glass sheet width~~, the belt-shaped glass sheets being arranged substantially flush with one another in the form of a frame;

a heating mechanism which thermally softens the end portions of the held belt-shaped glass sheets; and

a clamping mechanism which presses lap portions of the thermally softened end portions from both sides in ~~the~~ a thickness direction of the belt-shaped glass sheets, thereby joining the lap portions together and forming the lap portions to the thickness of one belt-shaped glass sheet.

12. (Previously Presented) A manufacturing apparatus according to claim 11, wherein the clamping mechanism includes a pair of pressure dies movable between a clamping position, in which the dies face each other across a gap substantially equal to the thickness of the belt-shaped glass sheets, and an open position, in which the dies are spaced, and a drive mechanism which moves the pair of pressure dies from the open position to the clamping position with the lap portions of the belt-shaped glass sheets situated between the pair of pressure dies so that the lap portions are clamped and pressed by means of the pressure dies.

13. (Previously Presented) A manufacturing apparatus according to claim 11, further

comprising a base which supports the glass sheet holding portion so that the belt-shaped glass sheets are situated substantially within a vertical plane, the base is rockable around a substantially horizontal axis of rotation, and can move the end portions of the belt-shaped glass sheets to a given joining position, and a sliding mechanism which supports the glass sheet holding portion for movement in the longitudinal direction of one of the belt-shaped glass sheets with respect to the base.

14. (Currently Amended) A method for manufacturing a side wall used for an image display apparatus, which comprises an envelope, having a front substrate and a rear substrate opposed to each other and a sidewall in the form of a rectangular glass frame located between the respective peripheral portions of the front substrate and the rear substrate, and a plurality of elements arranged in the envelope, comprising:

holding a plurality of belt-shaped glass sheets substantially flush with one another in the form of a frame and locating ~~the~~ end portions, which each have longitudinal side surfaces and a terminal end surface, of each two adjacent belt-shaped glass sheets so that the end portions overlap each other with longitudinal side surfaces of the end portions abutting one another ~~in a thickness direction of each glass sheet within the range of the glass sheet width~~;

thermally softening the overlapping end portions of the belt-shaped glass sheets; and

pressing lap portions of the thermally softened end portions at least once from both sides towards the abutting longitudinal side surfaces ~~in the thickness direction of the belt-shaped glass sheets~~, thereby joining the lap portions together and forming the lap portions to ~~the~~ a thickness of one belt-shaped glass sheet.

15. (Currently Amended) An apparatus for manufacturing a side wall used for an

image display apparatus, which comprises an envelope, having a front substrate and a rear substrate opposed to each other and a sidewall in the form of a rectangular glass frame located between the respective peripheral portions of the front substrate and the rear substrate, and a plurality of elements arranged in the envelope, the apparatus comprising:

a glass sheet holding portion which holds a plurality of belt-shaped glass sheets so that only ~~the~~ end portions thereof overlap each other ~~in a thickness direction of each glass sheet within the range of the glass sheet width~~, the belt-shaped glass sheets being arranged substantially flush with one another in the form of a frame and constituting the glass frame;

a heating mechanism which thermally softens the end portions of the held belt-shaped glass sheets; and

a clamping mechanism which presses lap portions of the thermally softened end portions from both sides in ~~the~~ a thickness direction of the belt-shaped glass sheets, thereby joining the lap portions together and forming the lap portions to the thickness of one belt-shaped glass sheet.